

Consultation on Code of Conduct changes to give effect to the recommendations of the Joint Working Group on Sexual Harassment and Sexist Behaviour

Consultation

1. This consultation seeks the views on changes to the Code of Conduct proposed by the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee (the Committee).

Introduction

2. At its meeting on 28 November 2019, the Committee agreed an expansion of the groups of individuals MSPs must treat with courtesy and respect. This was debated and agreed by Parliament on 10 December. The change arose through the Committee's work to implement the recommendations of the Parliament's JWG on Sexual Harassment and sexist behaviour.

3. The new wording brought MSPs' own staff within the courtesy and respect standard for the first time. It also made it clear that any behaviour which involved bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment) or any other inappropriate behaviour in relation to those mentioned in 7.5 would be a breach of the Code.

Proposed further revision to section 7 of the Code

4. The following proposed additional wording introduces a new standard for the treatment of individuals (other than those mentioned in the bullets at para 5) whom MSPs come in to contact with in the course of performing their role as parliamentarians.

Extract from Chapter 7 of the Code of conduct for MSPs

Treatment of others

5. Members must treat the following individuals with courtesy and respect:
- other MSPs;
 - parliamentary staff (including contractors providing services to the Parliament); and
 - their own staff and the staff of other MSPs.
6. Members must not behave in a manner towards ~~these individuals~~ **those individuals in 7.5 or any individuals they are in contact with in their capacity as MSPs** that involves bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment), or any other inappropriate behaviour.

5. This approach has been designed to ensure that the Parliament would be able to hold MSPs to account if they behaved inappropriately towards individuals external to the Parliament - such as members of the public, constituents or CPG members for example - who they had come in to contact

with as a result of performing their Parliamentary duties. The proposed change would not—

- interfere with an MSP's private life
- apply to minor instances of discourtesy or disagreement
- curtail an MSP's freedom of expression and ability to take part in robust political discourse.

How to submit your views

You are invited to respond by Friday 29 January 2021 by sending a written submission to the Committee by email to sppa.committee@parliament.scot.

If you have any queries about the changes proposed to the Code of Conduct, please contact the clerks to the Committee: sppa.committee@parliament.scot.

We welcome written views in English, Gaelic, Scots or any other language.

Important information

Before making a response, please read our privacy notice about submitting your views to a Committee. This tells you about how we process your personal data.

In most cases your response will be published on the Scottish Parliament's website and may be quoted in the Committee's report or in Committee meetings (which are public and broadcast).

If you wish to request that your response be published without your name, please contact us at SPPA.Committee@parliament.scot.

Thank you for taking the time to provide your views.